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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000340

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/IPA

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TAGS: PREL EAID KPAL BA

SUBJECT: SHAIKH MOHAMMED PRAISES LONDON MEETING, ABU

MAZEN'S PERFORMANCE

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister/Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa told the Ambassador March 7 that the March 1 London conference for assistance to the Palestinians was a great success. In a meeting covering several topics (septels), Shaikh Mohammed said that the focus of the conference was on moving forward -- developing the Palestinian Authority's capacity to run a state, and achieving progress on the roadmap now that it is "on the table." He appreciated his discussion with the Secretary on the margins of the conference and said he had invited her to visit Bahrain. He stated that the Secretary gave a very positive speech using balanced language.

¶2. (C) Abu Mazen was very impressive at the conference, Shaikh Mohammed said. He has a clear vision, is realistic, wants peace, and is working for his people to have a respectable life. Abu Mazen used the same language both publicly and privately, saying that the bombers are working against both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. Shaikh Mohammed worried that extremists might try to harm Abu Mazen because of his efforts.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador responded that it was important for the Arabs to publicly support Abu Mazen and to provide financial assistance. Shaikh Mohammed stated that the Arabs want to see a signal that Israel will respect official aid. He claimed that many times Arab donors have witnessed Israel destroying projects funded with Arab money. He said that Bahrain previously gave \$3 million in assistance to the Palestinians, and he had announced at the conference Bahrain's offer to provide technical assistance to the Palestinian financial sector and future training at the G-8/BMENA Entrepreneurship Center. Palestinian Finance Minister Fayyad personally thanked Shaikh Mohammed, saying, "we want people to teach us to fish, not just give us fish."

¶4. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said that at the Arab League (AL) Foreign Ministers meeting in Cairo following the London conference, Syrian Foreign Minister Sharaa made a statement about the Israel-Palestinian situation. Shaikh Mohammed said it was like Sharaa was "living in the past," and he challenged Sharaa, confronting him with Abu Mazen's own words. This was quite different from the type of discourse during Arafat's time, Shaikh Mohammed commented.

¶5. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said that he and his Tunisian and Algerian counterparts (the "troika" of former, current, and future AL chairs) met with the Iraqi Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the AL meeting about developing a favorable resolution on Iraq for the upcoming AL Summit in Algiers. He is confident the outcome will be positive. He told the Ambassador that King Hamad will lead the Bahraini delegation in Algiers, not Crown Prince Salman as had been announced previously.

MONROE